Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the subject application.

Listing of Claims:

1.-20. (cancelled).

21.   (currently amended) A method of controlling and directing the status of an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call, comprising:

A.   placing, with an automated calling system, a telephone call to a location having a telephone number associated with a target person contained in a predetermined list of target people;

B.   upon the telephone call being answered as determined by an initial spoken response, or other audio or telecommunication signals, initiating a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person;

C.   receiving a subsequent spoken response from an answering person or other audio signal and determining if said subsequent spoken response or other audio signal is being provided by an answering machine, and if not, performing a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the subsequent spoken response to determine the meaning of the subsequent spoken response; and

D.   providing any one of the following conditional responses based on the meaning of the subsequent spoken response as determined by the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis in accordance with a set of speaker-independent speech recognition enabled states of conversation including: (1) the answering person indicates that he or she is the target person, (2) the answering person indicates that he or she is not the target person, (3) the answering person indicates that the target person is not present at the location, (4) the answering person indicates a hold request, (5) the answering person requests the identity of the caller, (6) the answering person indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person; and (7) the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the subsequent spoken response from the answering person; and

F.E. responding appropriately to the results of the speech recognition analysis including the following conditional responses:

a.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the answering person is the target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

b.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for the target person, wherein, upon receiving another spoken response and determining whether the meaning of said another spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

c.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is not present at the location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person;

d.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the subsequent spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for the target person to provide yet another other spoken response to the telephone call, wherein upon receiving the yet another other spoken response, determining the meaning of the yet another other spoken response to determine whether the target person is now on the line, and if the meaning of the other yet another spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

e.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the subsequent spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E;

f.   if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating the telephone call; and

g.   if the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the subsequent spoken response, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating step C through step E.

22.-24. (cancelled).

25.   (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 21, further including the of detecting an answering machine upon the telephone call being answered.

26.   (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 21 25, wherein detecting an answering machine includes:

a.   upon the telephone call being answered, waiting for a predetermined time period for a spoken response;

b.   upon receiving the spoken response, playing a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for the target person;

c.   while playing the prerecorded greeting prompt, attempting to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter;

d.   in the absence of detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, initiating a query application;

e.   upon detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt, terminating the playing of the prerecorded prompt; and

f.   indicating that an answering machine has been detected.

27.   (Previously Added) The method of claim 26, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

28.   (Previously Added) The method of claim 27, further comprising attempting to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded answering machine message prompt

and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying the prerecorded prompt.

29.   (Previously Amended) A system for automatically directing and controlling an answered telephone during the course of an outbound telephone call so as to automatically initiate a speaker-independent speech recognition application with a target person, comprising:

an automated calling subsystem, for placing the automated outbound telephone call to the target person; and

an automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device configured to:

A.   initiate a prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person upon the telephone call being answered;

B.   receive a spoken response from an answering person or other audio signal and determine whether the call has been answered by an answering machine, and if not proceed to step C;

C.   perform a speaker-independent speech recognition analysis on the spoken response to determine the meaning of the spoken response; and

D.   provide any one of the following conditional responses based on the meaning of the spoken response as determined by the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis in accordance with a set of speaker-independent speech recognition enabled states of conversation including (1) the answering person indicates that he or she is the target person, (2) the answering person indicates that he or she is not the target person, (3) the answering person indicates that the target person is not present at the location, (4) the answering person indicates a hold request, (5) the answering person requests the identity of the caller, (6) the answering person indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, and (7) the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response from the answering person:

a.   if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is the target person, initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

b.　　if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the answering person is not the target person, initiating a prerecorded query asking for the target person, wherein, upon receiving a subsequent spoken response and determining whether the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

c.　　if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the target person is not present at the location, initiating a prerecorded query asking to leave a message for the target person;

d.　　if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a hold request, entering a wait state to wait for the target person to provide a spoken response to the telephone call, wherein upon receiving a subsequent spoken response, determining the meaning of the subsequent spoken response to determine whether the target person is now on the line, and if the meaning of the subsequent spoken response indicates that the target person is now on the line, further comprising initiating a speaker-independent speech recognition application with the target person;

e.　　if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the spoken response is a request for the identity of the caller, initiating a prerecorded response indicating the identity of the calling party, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating B through D;

f.　　if the meaning of the spoken response indicates that the telephone number is not the correct number for the target person, initiating a prerecorded apology message and terminating the telephone call; and

g.　　if the speaker-independent speech recognition analysis cannot determine the meaning of the spoken response, repeating the prerecorded greeting which asks for the target person, and repeating B through D.

30.　　(Previously Added) A system according to claim 29, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to detect an answering machine upon the telephone call being answered.

31.   (Previously Added) A system according to claim 30, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to:

a.   wait for a predetermined time period for a spoken response upon the telephone call being answered;

b.   play a prerecorded greeting prompt which asks for the target person upon receiving the spoken response;

c.   attempt to detect a further spoken response in excess of a predetermined time parameter while playing the prerecorded greeting prompt;

d.   initiate a query application in the absence of detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt;

e.   terminating the playing of the prerecorded prompt upon detecting a further spoken response during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt; and

f.   indicate that an answering machine has been detected.

32.   (Previously Added) The system of claim 31, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to attempt to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded greeting prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded greeting prompt and playing a prerecorded answering machine message prompt.

33.   (Previously Added) The system of claim 32, wherein the automated multi-state enabled speaker-independent speech recognition device is further configured to attempt to detect a beep tone during the playing of the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and, upon the detection of a beep tone, interrupting the prerecorded answering machine message prompt and replaying the prerecorded prompt.

34.-57.   (Cancelled)